Nixon's Bleeding Has Stopped but Danger Remains

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Doctors Cite Risk in Next Few Hours

By Stuart Auerbach
Washington Post Staff Writer

LONG BEACH, Calif., Oct. 31 — Doctors for former President Nixon said today they have managed to stop internal bleeding that brought him to the brink of death but he still faces the danger of further bleeding during the next 24 to 72 hours.

Dr. John C. Lungren, Mr. Nixon's chief physician, told a hastily-called news conference at the Long Beach Memorial Hospital Medical Center here:

"There is real danger lurking in the background—in the imminent background."

Mr. Nixon's doctors gave what Lungren called a "most important report" on Mr. Nixon's health — the finding of a minor decrease in his red blood cell count and a drop in his platelet count. Platelets are a clotting factor in the blood.

These two findings could have been a sign that the massive internal bleeding of last Tuesday afternoon had started again.

But after consulting this afternoon with Dr. Donald Mulder, professor of surgery at the University of California, Los Angeles, Lungren said, the doctors became convinced that the bleeding has been stopped.

Dr. James Harper, a surgeon, described the bleeding as "a generalized ooze" from tissue in Mr. Nixon's abdomen which had been cut during surgery Tuesday. The former President is susceptible to bleeding because of the anticoagulant treatment he had been receiving to prevent the formation of blood clots that could kill him if they reached the lungs.

Dr. Eldon Hickman, the surgeon who operated on Mr. Nixon, attributed the drop in the red blood cells and platelet counts to the normal dilution of Mr. Nixon's blood by the liquid nourishment he is being given intravenously.

To combat the decreases in red blood cells and platelets, the doctors said they have started giving Mr. Nixon transfusions of platelet concentrate and fresh whole blood.

They revealed for the first time since the operation that Mr. Nixon's clotting mechanism has returned to normal, which should further decrease the chances of more internal bleeding.

The doctors also announced today that Mr. Nixon is showing increased urinary output —a good sign since kidney failure often accompanies shock due to blood loss.

The news conference about 4 p.m. PST (7 p.m. EST) today marked the first time the doctors in charge of Mr. Nixon's

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treatment have met with the press in person since he went into shock Tuesday. Previously they have restricted themselves to issuing written statements, which left some questions unanswered.

Today's statement—issued a few hours before the news conference—said that Mr. Nixon's "spirits and mental attitude are excellent," but added, "it is still premature to offer a prognosis at this time. The possibility still exists for further complications."

In the statement, the doctors also reported for the first time since Mr. Nixon's condition became critical three days ago that his blood pressure and pulse have returned to normal levels—140 above 80 for his blood pressure, and 80 and regular for his pulse.

The doctors also said that Mr. Nixon's vital signs—pulse, blood pressure, respiration and heartbeat—are "now stable," and Nager indicated that there may have been some fluctuation between yesterday and today.

Mr. Nixon remained on the critical list in the hospital's intensive-care unit, under the constant watch of specially trained nurses.

But he was reported by his doctors to be "alert, oriented to everything going on around him and cooperative." The statement said nothing about whether the former President was conscious Wednesday.

"He didn't know where he was yesterday," a source who has been in and out of Mr. Nixon's room said of his condition Wednesday—one day after he took a turn for the worse following surgery early Tuesday.

Today, however, the former President was aware of everything around him, this source said.

The former President was operated on after treatment with anti-coagulant drugs failed to stop the formation of life-threatening blood clots in his phlebitis-stricken left leg. In the operation, the doctors placed a plastic clip on the left iliac vein below Mr. Nixon's groin—in an area just above the clot—to prevent pieces of coagulated blood from flowing into his lungs where they could cause death.

Drs. John C. Lungren, Mr. Nixon's chief physician, and Eldon Hickman, the chief surgeon, described the operation as successful. But the former President has suffered serious post-operative complications.

Massive internal bleeding that followed Tuesday's operation threw Mr. Nixon into shock which aide Ronald L. Ziegler said Wednesday almost cost the former President his life. Now, one expert not connected with the case said, Mr. Nixon's doctors are walking a tightrope between keeping his blood thin enough so that new clots do not form and providing him with enough of the clotting factor to stop the internal bleeding.

The doctors still have not restarted the anti-coagulant treatments that Lungren blamed for the internal bleeding. In fact, a source familiar with Mr. Nixon's treatment said today, they have begun giving him other drugs to counteract the blood thinning effects of the anti-coagulant in an attempt to stop the internal bleeding. This, however, runs the risk of allowing new clots to form.

Today's medical bulletin said nothing about Mr. Nixon's urinary output, and hospital officials refused to get any comment on it from the doctors. Kidney failure is a major complication following shock caused by internal bleeding, and next to stopping the internal bleeding and preventing the formation of new clots, it is one of the most important problems the doctors will be looking for.

Mr. Nixon's family — his wife, Pat, and daughters Julie and Tricia — spent most of the day at the hospital. They are allowed to visit with him for short periods every hour.

Statement by Nixon Doctors

United Press International

Text of the statement issued yesterday by physicians atending former President Nixon:

Dr. John Lungren, cardiologist and personal physician to former President Richard M. Nixon, and Dr. Eldon Hickman, cardiovascular surgeon who headed Mr. Nixon's surgery team, issued the following bulletin Thursday morning at Memorial Hospital.

The former President of the United States spent a more restful night. His vital signs now are stable. His blood pressure is 140 over 80. His pulse is 80 and regular. There has been a slight drop in the hemoglobin count of one-half gram since last night.

The significance of this change is being evaluated this morning. It may represent normal hemodilution, or we are keeping in mind the possibility of a slow oozing of blood into the retroperitoneal phase.

Again, the peritoneum is the tissue fat around the lining of the abdomen. Retro means behind.

Yesterday, former President Nixon was given one additional unit of packed red blood cells. We reported yesterday he had received three units. Since then, one additional unit of packed blood cells has been used.

His family is here from early morning until late evening and Mrs. Nixon visits her husband, Julie and Tricia visit with their dad briefly at hourly intervals.

His spirits, his mental attitude are excellent. He is alert. He is oriented to everything going on around him and he is cooperative.

Although he remains stable, he has not been taken off the critical list yet.

The possibility still exists for further complications. He remains under intensive observation by physicians and critical-care nurses. It is still premature to offer a prognosis at this time.

A hospital spokesman said this concluded the report of the physicians and he added:

Ladies and gentlemen at this time there is no time scheduled for the next briefing. Instead, the doctors promise to issue new information at such time as there is any significant change and as soon as they are free to give me the information or come down here.

They are not here, they have to be not only with Mr. Nixon but with other sick patients in this hospital demanding of their time and services. Please understand we have a commitment to more than 600 patients. That is our primary commitment.